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January 13, 2014

To: Task Force Studying Legal Disputes Involving the Care and Custody of Minor Children
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Comments to the Task Force studying Legal Disputes involving the Care & Custody of Minor Children

Dear Task Force Committee Members,

After watching your Task Force's January 9, 2014 Public Hearing on the CT-Network, I felt compelled to write. Much of the testimony brought back vivid memories of my sister's divorce hearing seven years ago; particularly the injustices, collusion and deficiencies I observed in our state's Family Court System.

I was originally drawn in her divorce when both my sister and her (then) husband told me stories which I found difficult to believe; starting with a judge, who forever delayed implementing child support funding in accordance with the state's published guidelines, until he was finally embarrassed into doing so by me.

For the benefit of the children involved in a divorce, this basic level of financial support should be granted to the parent who will be housing the children during the divorce immediately and without exception.

Then, my sister and her (then) husband repeatedly communicated to the judge that they did not want a GAL to participate. Not only did this judge appoint a very expensive GAL; he appointed one who had business relationships with one of the attorneys involved. The GAL was more than mischievous and untrustworthy; she caused far more harm to my niece and nephews than good. I personally met with her on two occasions; and during these meeting she made it abundantly clear that she alone would be making all decisions regarding the future placement and visitation schedules for these children. Clearly exceeding all reasonable limits of authority, there was no means to rein this GAL back-in. This was not an inexperienced GAL either; research indicated that she had many years of "experience and training"; and many, many complaints filed against her.

Unless at least one parent supports the decision to engage the services of a GAL, no judge should mandate the use of one; and a means must be implemented to replace overzealous GAL's.

Being an elected official, what was perhaps most egregious was, the frequent collusion between the attorneys involved, the GAL and on one occasion, the judge; who would meet for drinks on Thursday evenings at taverns in Glastonbury and West Hartford. I personally observed the attorneys and the GAL meet at these establishments on two occasions during the months that the divorce was on-going (and all parties admitted to being present on these occasions). It soon became clear to me that during these meetings ex-parte communications were taking place which affected both the parents and the children.

Unless the marriage partners provide their consent in writing, there should be no ex-parte communications regarding the children, their custody or their care outside of the courthouse.

Respectfully,

Frank C. DeFelice